

2017

Southwinds - Spring 2017

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Southwinds

**The Creative Arts Magazine
of Missouri S&T**

Spring 2017



About *Southwinds*

Southwinds is published annually in the spring semester and distributed free of charge to the Missouri S&T community. The club Southwinds, which produces the magazine, is a recognized student organization and **open to all students**.

Each fall semester, *Southwinds* invites submissions from Missouri S&T students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Poetry, stories, photographs, and original artwork should be submitted to **southwinds.mst.edu**.

If you are an undergraduate or graduate student on the S&T campus with an interest in creative writing, the visual arts, layout & design, and/or if you would like to help produce or promote the next issue of *Southwinds*, please contact the group's faculty advisor, Dr. Anne Cotterill, at **cotteril@mst.edu**. Dr. Cotterill's office is in room 219 of the Humanities and Social Sciences building.

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Inside back: Spicebush Swallowtail Caterpillar, by Stephen Roberts

Back: View of the Aegean Sea from Bozcaada, by Ed Malone

It All Comes Full Circle

Sue Wallace

Slowly, methodically, she smoothed the moist, supple cream under her lined eyes. Her short, veined fingers stroked the skin wantonly, begging it to tighten and firm up. As she reached for another dollop of salvation, she stared at her hands, once clear and free of color, now mottled with a mass of devious freckles. She sighed audibly.

Staring at her hand now forced her to look into the mirror instead of beyond it, as she usually did.

What looked back at her both mesmerized and disgusted her.

Her hair, though nicely cut, screamed for repentance from the years of hair coloring. Errant gray hairs crept stealthily from behind her ears, poking and prodding their way to the front of her face, forcing everyone around her to consider that she was no longer youthful. But that wasn't all.

If she didn't smile, the lines around her eyes were captive. They couldn't belie her age. She would stare warmly at others, but the smile was hidden, stabilizing the lines, the jowls, the jagged crevices around her mouth. Her neck seemed to swarm with tunnels of flesh, as the neck sunk into her shoulders.

She winced knowing what was under her pale green, flowing gown. Her breasts settled nicely on her rounded, protruding stomach, once flat and unscathed. Her hips had spread like a Sunday afternoon picnic blanket and now covered more and more of the chair as she sat. In fact, generous portions had made their way onto the sides of the chair, and hung there, aching to be pulled to safety, but to no avail. Legs, once tight and firm, now swung into each other at the thigh line, sticking in the heat, and jiggling with secret merriment like so many cubes of Jell-O in a cup.

Her feet still looked pretty good. "You should show off your best assets." Which explained the 60 pairs of shoes.

Where had the years gone? When had the weight become a battle every day, with the number on the scales now higher than the price of a small Starbucks Frappuccino? When did the person in the mirror begin looking like a caricature?

It was a revelation. A fact that was true and cyclical and expected. But, somehow, the aging process had been a surprise. An unwanted surprise. A surprise of defeat.

As she rose to leave the bathroom area, light streamed from the opening door, as the nurse stepped into the quiet room.

"Mrs. Smith, your daughter-in-law is out of the recovery room."

She stepped through the door and into the cold, barren waiting room, feeling the ache in her legs and back as she moved. Nothing serious, just a cramping from sitting too long. Another surprise come to call. Again, unwelcome.

She sat down next to her husband of 25 years, who was kind, and loving and really didn't care that the woman he had married then was now trapped somewhere inside a body that was screaming to be 24 again. Middle age was a cruel joke.

As she sat there, wondering at the dancing bears and colorful balloons on the faded walls, the door to the operating room opened, and a large, green-masked man strode purposely out.

"Mom, Dad, it's a girl!" exclaimed her 25-year-old son, holding forth a pink bundle of tiny hands and feet. From deep within the folds came a soft mewling sound. As she took the bundle from him, and touched the soft, silken fingers that clutched her own freckled ones, nothing mattered but the words "Grandma" and the knowing that this was the reason for the Cycle of Life.



CATCH OF THE DAY — BETH ABNER

To Absent Friends

Nora Schuey

"It's not that big of a deal what scent, I don't think," Marleen said, glancing at Tara as they perused the incense section of the craft store Tara's grandmother was most familiar with and had given a glowing recommendation. "We just need like, a lot of it. A big bundle."

"That doesn't seem right," Tara answered. "I would assume the scent would have to be important to the person you're contacting. You know, draw them in?" Marleen shrugged. There were enough options in the aisle that they could find something Annie would have liked, she supposed, but it still felt a bit over the top to get so worried about the scent itself. The smoke seemed like the most important part, at least from what she'd read. She couldn't see how it mattered, in the long run, if their circle smelled more like "Sandalwood Rose" or "Nag Champa" or "Lemon Pound Cake." Annie would have known.

"What about this one?" Tara said suddenly, pulling over a shiny white stick with red sparkles and holding it below Marleen's nose. She inhaled, then smiled. "It's like that cute candy cane Chapstick she used to get us all for Christmas." The two looked at each other for a moment, joy in their eyes from the memories, coupled with sadness, too. They hadn't gotten any of that Chapstick in about two years.

That evening in Marleen and Tara's small house, the furniture had all been pushed out of the sitting area and into the bedroom, replaced in the center by a circle, about the size of particularly large kitchen table, set out in the clear glass stones people put in the bottom of fish bowls. The fire alarms had been temporarily disconnected. The lights were dimmed, and the beige walls flickered only with the light of the few tea candles that Tara had been able to find on sale while shopping for the incense.

Tara sat cross legged on the floor, a wooden cigar box covered in a white pillow case in front of her with a thick white candle in the center, next to a framed photograph. Marleen was walking inside the perimeter of their stone circle, the bundle of burning incense held aloft and sending up a haze of minty fresh smoke. She held her nose – maybe 25 sticks had been an overestimate. It was important, though. Annie needed to know.

"Did you go around seven times?" Tara whispered, looking into the hand-written notebook that sat beside her on the wooden floor, squinting to read in the candle light.

"Not yet..." Marleen said softly, moving to circle one final time before gingerly

placing the bundle of incense onto the metal plate where they would let it burn during the ritual. "Now I have." She turned and sat down across from her longtime lover and friend. "What next?"

"Okay. So, she says we light the candle first," Tara said under her breath, pulling out her lighter and setting the center candle's wick alight. Marleen's face reflected Tara's through the glare of her glasses, flickering together in the darkness. "Then we meditate on her, um. Memories of her. For a while."

"Like, together?" Marleen asked, "or quietly?"

Tara shrugged. "Uh, it's kind of written for one person. I think we could talk about it, though. Out loud."

They did. In the warm candlelight and mint-scented dimness of the small home, the pair's gentle voices reminisced on their old friend. They talked of Annie's kindness, of her dedication to volunteering with the local animal shelter. Laughing, they recalled how she had struggled with her need to take in every unfortunate cat or dog that made its way into her arms. They remembered her struggles, sharing a meaningful look as they recalled her dark days, the weeks when Annie could barely leave the house. The darkness and the bright light Annie had carried which had all been taken away by a single drunk driver on a rainy Friday night.

"We hold the candle, now, here," Tara murmured, picking up the candle in both hands and holding it out for Marleen to clasp as well. "And then focus on the picture and say the chant."

They both stared hopefully at the framed photo, quiet voices whispering the words that Annie had written down in her book of shadows all those years ago.

"We feel your warmth," Marleen and Tara said together. "We see your light. You are in our hearts, souls, and mind. Please, Annie, join us."

Seven times they repeated the chant, then looked up into one another's eyes expectantly. The candle in their joined hands flickered about as if a gust of wind had rushed in between them.

"Annie—" Marleen said, soft and unsure, "Annie... we're getting married."

The flame of the candle flared brightly, all flickering gone as it glowed and glowed and glowed.



HEADS OF STATUES ON NEMRUT DAĞ (MOUNT NEMRUT) IN TURKEY – ED MALONE

The Butterfly of Death

Caitlin Siehr

The dark witch seeped through every orifice,
Inhabiting the beautifully winged creature.
Just before dusk, the entity crept through crevices
And fluttered about the weak, plaster-covered ceilings.

Rivalling beasts in the basement,
Who had dwelled there much longer,
And relentless in nature,
Each corner was conquered.

Journeying for shallow virgin breaths,
Mouths gaped open to the unwelcome presence,
Lungs shriveled, mortal flesh and memories consumed.
With every encounter, only one's demise would arise.

Alluring and mysterious it may have been,
But it was no comparison to the evil deep within.
The butterfly of death, folklore tend to call it
Is sinister and callous and does ominously thrive.

Ice

Agnes Vojta

The woods are a crystal cathedral,
trees sculpted of glass.
Brittle branches clink
when the wind whispers –
glistening, deadly beauty
frozen in time

Milkweed

Agnes Vojta

The capsule burst open;
fuzzy floss spills out:
soft white parachutes
for small seeds that yearn
to float away like dreams.



MILKWEED — AGNES VOJTA



Cascade Song

Agnes Vojta

On the barren lava soil,
windswept pines stretch out their arms,
gnarled white bones against the sky.

Mountain wears majestic white
glacier robes that flow between
buttress ridges of black rock.

Rushing rivers tumble down
to the valley, where blue lakes
greet like eyes in seas of green.

A Good Knight's Lullaby

Alexis R. Fjora

Foot falls falter as green one climbs up the tree that stills all time
To scream and shout and sing her song, proclaiming what was done is wrong
High above those that share the sky to search out one who might know why
Or guess the purpose of the lie that set us on this path to die.
No sound so sweet; the damned man's cry a soulful sorrow short the peak--
While just below him branches sigh, let out a weary warning creak.
Shame-shared resolve resends again to drag the ragged for a spin
When just around the broken bend sings Jay a promise to her kin.
Still Gray a gloom does threaten now, dark winds whirl wicked laughter,
A deal struck low beneath the howl of no fight here thereafter
Our calling card to fall so hard yet rise without a scratch,
A scratch so deep, a fall so bleak we won't be coming back.
A long look forward, leap of faith, fall us far toward our last?
Wind's wailing whistle in our ear as we await the slack
To cease the burden on our souls, or rend us twain in half
To gift us now perchance our goals, to further hone our craft.

The sun's light revels in a cruel sight that as a first upon the 'morrow
we'll be ready the cherub's day;
Yet, not without a pang of sorrow that we are without our say.
At our height we've yet to climb and may never be with time,
Facing punishment plenty petty and without a will to crime.
We await the moon's welcome glow with eyes foreign to its sight
Accepting the Jay a feathered show to prove with might the right.
Yet here we dwell night dark and cold as felons run about
Is it futile we fight the hold as dark we try to rout?
We call to question all we know, but know the answers here
Praying the Gate Guard's stance does hold not buckle worse for wear.
The ticking tracks the hours gone in place the lacking of alarm
Through the fight and through the night we wade and weather constant harm.
And here we're now and now is found; a tear wept the porcelain mask
And force compels it to the ground like nothing meant to last.
The truth be told we are revealed with swift the drums and canvas;
Yet mourn we not what was concealed in hope we now can have this.

The end begins and five we rise, hoof, wing, knife, height and mind.
A party used to trying times prepared to fight the madness
And though false fate ties tight the bind, shackles sharp to cut and grind
The Jay's sweet song played true with time a constant source of gladness.
March we forth, left, right, left, right clad only in deep blue

No arms or shield and just the truth protecting each from you
The hymns have hummed of battles won and valor pure and true
None are composed that bring to light that which you always knew
And though the war is far from won, the case not near to close
Hold we fast what has been done, a great farewell to woes
And in the night, the dying light, our foes brightened by the moon
Racing thoughts 'rased from all sight to chase away the gloom
Our heart holds tight--estranged to fright--Hope present in the room
As we prepare with mickle care for this life to resume.
Should judgement come and we be strung namesake or nirvana
It matters not for truth we sought and leave we now with honor.



CHECKMATE — CYNTHIA PHAM

Beauty

Suzanne Young

In life in love we're all concerned
With what beauty should really be
 To some it is a symmetry
 To me it is pure honesty
While others may concern themselves
 With precision and perfection
I live in search of pure expression
 It matters not what medium
So long as one finds meaning there
Whether poet painter or sculptor be
All concern should be for honesty
 True to feelings fully felt
 As a tree unto itself
As raw passion-triggered tears
Though complication sometimes is best
 Simplicity is all you need
 To stir this heart of mine
When one can speak through
brush strokes or impassioned words
How they feel and what they love
 That true beauty is to me

Let Me Go

Suzanne Young

When air has long caressed me
When time has passed me by
When my thoughts have grown from seed to tree
Let the earth hold me so I may die



SULTAN QUABOOS MOSQUE IN MUSCAT, OMAN — STEPHEN ROBERTS



SULTAN QUABOOS MOSQUE IN MUSCAT, OMAN — STEPHEN ROBERTS

Regarding Doves

Alexis R. Fjora

She found him atop the same tree in which he'd found her when they met, perched in a crouch at the break in the far branch.

"I know you're watching me," he says quietly as if to the air, so softly that had there been a breeze she may not have caught it. "I know what you're thinking," he continues.

"I know what you're thinking," she counters.

"DO YOU?!" The raw emotion in his voice is like thunder in the silent night and she can't help but flinch with a squeak of apprehension against the coming wrath that trails the coattails of his words, but when she wills her eyes open once more she sees only his softened expression and tired eyes that betray his age--there were tears in them. "I suppose you do..."

She starts her slow walk out onto the angled tree like a pirate walking a plank--slow, as if all the caution in the world could somehow benefit what is to come. "Would you die for your pride? What happened to not caring?"

"What happened indeed?" he asks in return, "and besides haven't I yet?" He turns back around now to face the cliffside. "Maybe I just finally understand that it's better if I'm gone..." He chances a step onto the branch that had been nearly severed clean and it holds. "And isn't that for the best? They lash at me, they demonize me, they take all I have and destroy whatever good finds its way into my life... If only you knew what they would—" The branch lurches with a sickening snapping sound and she is forced to hug a nearly horizontal portion of the tree for dear life. The man, on the other hand, simply smiles into the night and continues, "Oh, quit your tantrum, it will be done soon enough," he says with a slight chuckle to the tree, then more seriously, "Allow me this last pleasantry, as a final sin."

She begins to inch her way closer to him, but there is still a good twelve foot of tree between them, and the cliff over which it hangs is quite the daunting height. "Why now then?" she asks as the cold bark scrapes at her skin; she wishes she had worn something more substantial than a skirt. "What's different now?"

There is such a long drawn-out silence wherein the only sound to be heard is the chirping of little woodland bugs behind them that she is nearly sure he hadn't heard her when he finally does answer, "You."

And for another long moment her heart stopped, and for another long moment she drew no breath before choking down her stomach, which had made its way up her

throat, in order to ask, "Me...?" tears forming in her eyes faster than her tongue could form coherent words. "I know I'm a pain..." Her words were interrupted by a chuckle as equally broken as her heart, "but I... I thought--I hoped we were..."

And his heart sinks as her thoughts are lost to tears.

"...Please." He had lost everything but his balance now, all composure, all thought gone as he turns to face the small girl who had stopped her approach only to see her weeping into the hard and cold surface of the trunk of the tree. "Don't be upset."

She lets go, her mind ceaselessly reeling from thought to awful dark thought as her skull suddenly became a vise, far too tight. Her head began to throb, and she could feel her pulse in her eyes. Each beat of her heart a peak of heightened pain as she comes to terms with the fact that all this damage done, all the pain and misery, the final strike that broke this great man's soul was her doing... and she lets herself fall.

The man crashes to his knees, and the tree creaks in protest, a pathetic cry being the only noise he can muster. His entirety ached, and he felt if he were to draw breath his lungs may burst. Tears were running from his eyes in torrents before hysterical sobbing takes hold of him. The one thing he valued, the one thing he loved, and the one thing that ever mattered to him through all his years of suffering, the one person for whom he was willing to die in order to keep from harm... gone, just like that--and just like that, death was a mercy he would never deserve. Vowing to see to his own misery as penance, he rises to his feet before the branch underfoot finally gives way to wear, sending him plummeting unwillingly to his demise--his last sight the mangled remains of his love, her corpse the stuff of his nightmares.

To love is to suffer the thought of their suffering, to bear the painful pride of perishment but weep their widowing day because sometimes to kill two doves you need only fell one.

Right Now

Amanda Bloom

I am greater than the black sum of my past, and even greater now than the white possibilities of my future. Right here, right now, I am a rich field of grey textures and shadows that beg to be felt and experienced.



NEW MEXICO WOODS — MATTHEW DORSEY

Winter Rain

Agnes Vojta

A bleak morning, I waken
to relentless rain.
Drops pearl the redbuds.

Broken branches beckon
with slimy fingers.

A deserted nest perches
in the plum tree;
black and wet, it does not
remember the fledglings.

Silhouettes

Agnes Vojta

Like dancers,
the elms lift their arms
skyward.
The oaks clutch the air
with gnarled fingers,
bony branches
etched into the pastel evening.

It is time
to step forward,
uncloaked,
my naked shadow
dancing
on the canvas of the world.



SPEED — CHARLES SERROW

Augenblick I–II

Ross Reed

Augenblick I

Denise fell in love on Saturday, May 17, 1997. She knew it because she had written it in her journal. She had written, with her favorite red pen: “May 17, 1997. This is the best day of my life so far and I think it’s only going to get better and better. I’m in love with Jerry. I know it for sure this time. Not like all those other false alarms with guys who weren’t worth it. This time it’s for real. I’ve known Jerry for 42 days. Ever since he came over to our house that first day. Skip didn’t even notice a thing, which isn’t unusual for him. He’s not too observant, to say the least. But Jerry and I both noticed. God was it awesome. I knew it was going to be big and here we are in love. I know Jerry feels it too. He’s going to tell me any day.” Then Denise drew two hearts below what she had written, in the middle of the page, two hearts overlapping, interlocking. She closed her journal, stuffed it back in the drawer, locked the drawer, and ambled into the den to wait for Skip to return from work so they could head out to dinner at an Asian place across town.

Denise had fallen in love on May 17, 1997 and she was sure to make a note of it. She also remembered clearly that at the time, it was the first time she had fallen in love in her adult life, maybe in her whole life. She wasn’t sure about the latter claim, since her relationships with Brian Rogers and Bruce Oberholtzer felt like love at the time but had been so long ago that any assertions she might have made about them would have been pure speculation. But she was more aware now, she knew, so she was as certain as any mortal could be that she had fallen in love with Jerry Stevenson on May 17, 1997, only six weeks after her thirty-sixth birthday. In a sense, she liked the definitiveness of being able to know the exact day she fell in love; it was kind of comforting and besides, she liked benchmarks, especially when it came to relationships. And she liked the feeling, so what’s not to like? It’s all good, she told herself. Just go with it. Riding on a cloud of amorous affection was the best it could get: life seemed worth living, everything made sense, her life had a purpose. Yeah, she thought, you can’t go wrong when you fall in love. And it’s just not something you can force like you can a long-term relationship.

But, she noted, there are downsides to everything and unfortunately, even to falling in love, which is categorically different, she was certain, from just loving someone. With falling in love, it’s almost like falling over a cliff: you’ve got, essentially, nothing to hold onto, and you have no idea what it’s gonna be like when you hit bottom, if you ever do, or even if there is a bottom. If you just pay attention to the fall itself, it’s more like a bungee jump, and everybody knows people will go way out of their way and pay good money just to jump off a high place with some super giant-ass rubber bands tied around their ankles just for the thrill of it, just like with love—people can’t wait to inconvenience themselves in every possible way known to man just to feel the falling part—the falling in love. But once again,

she noted, you never know when you’re going to hit bottom, or even if there is a bottom, and you don’t exactly know if you’ve got the super giant-ass rubber bands on your ankles either. So the crashshoot is part of the rush. But every rush, at least in theory, can have a down side. You just don’t know it ‘till it’s staring you in the face. Well, that’s how it is, she thought, thankful that at least she had taken the time back on May 17, 1997 to state definitely that she had fallen in love. As for the bottom of the cliff, the super giant-ass rubber bands, the ankle pain, and all the other stuff that comes after the jump, she didn’t know any of that yet. She just knew the rush of the jump.

Jerry Stevenson was an unlikely candidate for the falling in love of Denise Protevlieri, something even she herself noted. But falling in love, by definition—like all of the other natural mysteries in the universe—was not a phenomenon amenable to human comprehension, so Denise, wise to this reality, left it as a fact. And if you fall in love with someone, really fall in love with them, she knew, certain things follow as the day follows night. Denise met Jerry the day he came over to Skip and Denise’s place to bid on a remodeling job for the upstairs bathroom. The one downstairs was simply a sink and toilet, but the upstairs was a full bath. Both sported ‘60s design and wallpaper. Skip and Denise had discussed it at length, multiple times, and concerning the remodel, they were emphatically on the same page. Jerry had his own business, ASAP Construction, and he arrived in a Ford van with the logo painted on the side. It was a clear, still rather crisp day in early April, but the fragrance of flowers was in the air. Denise and Skip were both there that Saturday morning, Skip having advised against letting a stranger in when Denise was all alone.

Denise answered the door. What she saw was a man in his mid-thirties or so, with shaggy blonde hair protruding from under his white paper Buckeye Paints painter’s cap, about 5’10”, wearing dirty one-piece blue overalls, brownish-yellow leather work boots and smelling strongly of cigarette smoke. Denise had a feeling the minute he stepped in, a feeling that persisted as he talked with (mostly) Skip, Denise following and observing, watching Jerry as he detailed the ins and outs of what he could do for the bathroom that Denise had described to him as “clearly tragic.” “I think I can do something for your tragic situation,” he had said in response, with a low chuckle. Denise liked that. She liked that a lot. Jerry didn’t seem quite like the serious white-collar business guys like Skip and all the others she had to hang around at the tedious-as-hell dinner parties. No, Jerry seemed to be a lot looser than those stuffy self-important types, and Denise liked it right away. When he got there, she had a feeling, while he was there, she had a feeling, and when he left she had a feeling. It was a feeling she liked, and she wanted to feel it again. She managed to convince Skip to take the first bid, ASAP Construction—not an easy thing to do, what with Skip’s general approach to getting anything done around the house—even though the written estimate was, for all practical purposes, illegible and short on details. Denise called Jerry the following Monday morning to give him the news. He said he could start in “about two to three weeks.” Denise was so looking forward to it.

Augenblick II

"Puccini, you dumb-ass. Puccini," Denise said with exasperation. "Are you joking?"

"P-U what? Is that some kind of fancy lettuce from somewhere real exotic?"

Jerry looked at her flatly, waiting for a reply.

"Jerry, it's POO-CHEE-KNEE. C'mon, say it, will ya?"

"Pooch..."

"POO-CHEE..."

Jerry cut her off. "That's what I figured. If it starts with pooh, how good can it be? Don't wanna be eatin' that stuff. Go on ahead yourself."

"JERRY. Listen. Turandot? Madame Butterfly?"

Jerry threw her a blank look.

"Puccini is a composer, not a lettuce. He's an Italian opera composer."

"Whoopee. Why didn'tcha say so in the first place?"

"And you've never heard of him?"

"No."

"Never?"

"No, never. And if I did, I wouldn't know it 'cause I didn't even know what you were sayin' just now. It would go on and escape me, that's all, even if I did hear it, know what I mean?" Jerry was just talking like any other day, but Denise was angry, really angry.

"Don't you ever listen to NPR? You've got all day, working."

"NPR? What?" Jerry sounded confused.

"Come on. Public Radio. National Public Radio."

"Denise, no I do not. You know I listen to FM 97, country radio – pure country radio. No Puke-chi-chi on there," Jerry said, making the mistake of laughing.

"How can you be so ignorant? OK, forget that, that's not really what chaps my ass. I think I just figured it out. It's not that you don't know. It's that you don't care. You aren't even curious. You don't care at all." Denise rolled over toward the wall, pulling most of the covers off of Jerry, who tried to at least get the sheet over himself.

Jerry was silent for some time, on his back, staring at the ceiling. "It's not that I don't care. I do care about..."

"Yeah, you care about what you care about, right. You care about what you care about and that's it," Denise said into the wall.

"Somethin' like that. I care about what I care about. So? What's your point? It's the same thing for you, am I right?" Jerry said, tentatively.

"I care about what I care about is just not good enough, Jerry." Denise rolled back over, face to the side of his head. "IT'S JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH, JERRY, YOU MORON. HOW ARE YOU EVER GOING TO LEARN ANYTHING IF YOU ONLY CARE ABOUT THE STUFF YOU CARE ABOUT, DUMB-ASS?"

Jerry was still staring at the ceiling and it seemed to Denise that he wasn't even ruffled by his lack of intellectual, artistic, and cultural curiosity. The enormous, cavernous lacuna in his knowledge didn't seem to bother him in the least. "Denise," he said slowly, "you can't tell me this is all because of the Puke-chi guy or whatever, right? There's got to be some other issue, am I right?"

"YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY NOT RIGHT, YOU IDIOT. WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT? FOCUS, YOU DOUCHE BAG. FOCUS." Denise yelled into the side of Jerry's head, only inches from his left ear.

Jerry remained unruffled. "So we're fighting about some dead I-talian guy? Are you serious?"

Denise could barely believe how stupid he seemed. And she knew it because it didn't seem to bother him. It didn't seem to bother him in the least. "We're talking about you, Jerry," she said, regaining a modicum of composure.

"If you say so, since we sure ain't talking about you, if you know what I mean."

"No, as a matter of fact I don't. What the hell do you mean, genius?"

Jerry remained unperturbed. "Denise, it's like this—you don't want to talk about you. You want to talk about me, or about us, and that's cool. But you don't even like me, do ya?"

"That's not true. That's not true at all. I love you Jerry and you know it,"

Denise said, rolling hard back to the wall. This time she took all the covers, exposing Jerry in the buff. "Look. If I didn't love you, why would I be this upset?"

Jerry didn't answer. He struggled to disentangle some of the covers and pull them over himself. "What do you like about me, Denise? I'd kind of like to know."

Denise rolled back over and stared at Jerry, who was still staring at the ceiling.

"How can you say that? That's so mean."

"It sounds like you hate me just for not knowing the I-talian dude, am I right? I don't know the guy and you hate me for it."

"Jerry, I love you. I totally love you. Didn't you feel it when we made love?"

"Yeah, sure, Denise, I felt it," Jerry said flatly. "And you just took all my covers too. Plus somethin' tells me you're gonna hold it against me, that I don't know what you think I'm supposed to know."

"That's ridiculous, Jerry," Denise said softly, stroking his hair. "I would never do that. I just thought you might want to know."

"I might, but yelling about it is kind of a turnoff, see?"

"OK, Jerry, you're right. Sorry I yelled."

"What's the matter, Denise? I mean, the real problem. Might as well get it on the table, alright? Nobody's gonna bite ya."

"Jerry, there IS no real problem. We were talking about you."

"Oh yeah, I forgot. It's me."

Denise again felt her anger flash. "Look, it's bad enough that you want to remain ignorant for the rest of your life, but when you start to blame me..."

"Denise, I'm not blamin' you. I'm asking you if somethin's wrong. Is it about Skip?"

The anger was escalating. “Jerry, you know you’re not supposed to bring him up—ever—and NO, it has nothing to do with him. You keep deflecting and it really pisses me off.”

“You’re pissed ‘cause I want to know if you’re OK? For real? I don’t understand you.”

“That’s for sure. You don’t. You don’t even get it when I say I love you.”

“Is it hormones? Is that it? Or is it because you’re just plain miserable?”

Now Denise was fully pissed. She rolled overtop Jerry, jumped onto the floor and stomped toward the bathroom. Jerry watched her bare ass disappear around the corner.

He crawled out of bed, put on his boxers and his Def Leppard T-shirt, got his cigarettes off the dresser, and walked out onto the back porch for a smoke. If Denise Protevlieri was anything, she was an idealist. And, being an idealist left her, well, thirsting for more. Always thirsting for more. Consequently, reality had a way of letting her down. Not now and then, but every single time. Reality was hard for her to stomach, oftentimes, so she avoided it. In the simplest of terms, Denise Protevlieri had a low tolerance for reality. Part of her knew it, but not the part that ended up making the decisions that counted. It was no contest, no contest at all when the way things were came up against the way Denise thought things were supposed to be. TKO every time. Whether or not Denise aimed high or low, she always aimed somewhere other than reality. Even in theory, she found the concept of reality mildly annoying—as any steadfast idealist is wont to do. She wanted things to be the way things were supposed to be—but for some reason things were never the way they were supposed to be, and Denise resented it. It just galled her to no end that she kept getting a raw deal out of life, that what happened never lined up with what ought to happen. But the one thing she never tired of telling herself was that she had to work as hard as she could to make what was supposed to happen happen, because if she didn’t, her reasoning continued, what was supposed to happen might not happen, and that would be the saddest thing in the world. Besides, she already knew what that felt like and she sure as hell didn’t want it to happen again—although, the more she thought about it, the more it seemed to her that it happened every time, no matter how hard she tried. Better to bask in the fantasy of the ideal than to sink in the tragedy of the real.

Denise Protevlieri fell out of love with Jerry Stevenson on August 11, 1997. But she kept trying to fall back in until somewhere around Memorial Day of the following year, at which time she decided to give it up. Jerry still couldn’t remember who Puccini was, so she told herself it was for the best. To everything there is a season, she said—better not wait ‘til the fruit’s down and the maggots are feasting. Besides, she had trouble remembering anything that she liked about Jerry. The guy was just not remediable, the way she saw it. At least, that’s what she told Roberta Bradley on Tuesday, June 2, 1998, during session number 339:

Dr. Bradley: [Smiling] “It’s been awhile, Denise. Very good to see you.”

Denise: [Smiling back] “Thanks, Roberta. Good to be here. It has been awhile.”

[Both sit in their respective seats.]

Dr. Bradley: “It looks like, according to my records, it’s been well over a year.”

Denise: “Yeah, that’s what I was thinking.”

Dr. Bradley: “What’s on your mind today that you decided to make an appointment and come back in?”

Denise: “I keep meeting losers, like this guy I just broke up with who I thought was it, you know, the one—but it turned out he was just not remediable, the dumb-ass. I’m starting to think every guy is a loser.”

Dr. Bradley: “I suppose we’re not talking about your husband?”

Denise: “No, absolutely not. We’re not talking about Skip. We’re talking about this other guy, Jerry. He was so great at first, but then he changed. They all change.”

Dr. Bradley: “If I remember correctly, that’s one of the things you don’t like about Skip—that he doesn’t change. Is that true?”

Denise: “What? That he doesn’t change, or that that’s one of the things I don’t like about him?”

Dr. Bradley: “Both.”

Denise: Yeah, I suppose you’re right. He doesn’t change and it bores me to tears. So freakin’ predictable.

Dr. Bradley: So, Denise—you want someone who will change, since what you don’t like about Skip is that he doesn’t change. But you don’t want someone who will change in the wrong way, like Jerry. You want someone who will change in the right way.

Denise: Yeah, that about sums it up.

Dr. Bradley: And do you know what changing in the right way looks like?

Denise: I’ll know it when I see it.

Dr. Bradley: And you haven’t seen it yet?

Denise: Definitely not.



TOGETHER - SCOTT NEUSTADT

Refractions

Rebecca Marcolina

that which is breathing
that which is seeing,
that which is watching the rise and fall of leaves in the wind
with the same level of reverence as the rise and fall of the monitor's spikes;
everything crumbles in Midwinter.

that which is dreaming
that which is dying,
pondering those which are impossible to comprehend
like why you threw up again last night.

it is am i magnificent enough's,
it is pouring myself out like tepid tap water in hospital waiting rooms,
it is repapering the walls of my heart with cellophane to prevent leaks,
but setting buckets under the cracks out of habit to prepare for the floods.

I Do Not Love Thee Anymore

Jack Morgan

I do not love thee
anymore
New England
in winter. I'm
weary of your
wood smoke,
your wan sun if any,
snowstorm residues
lingering,
your radical
cold embrace.

DQ

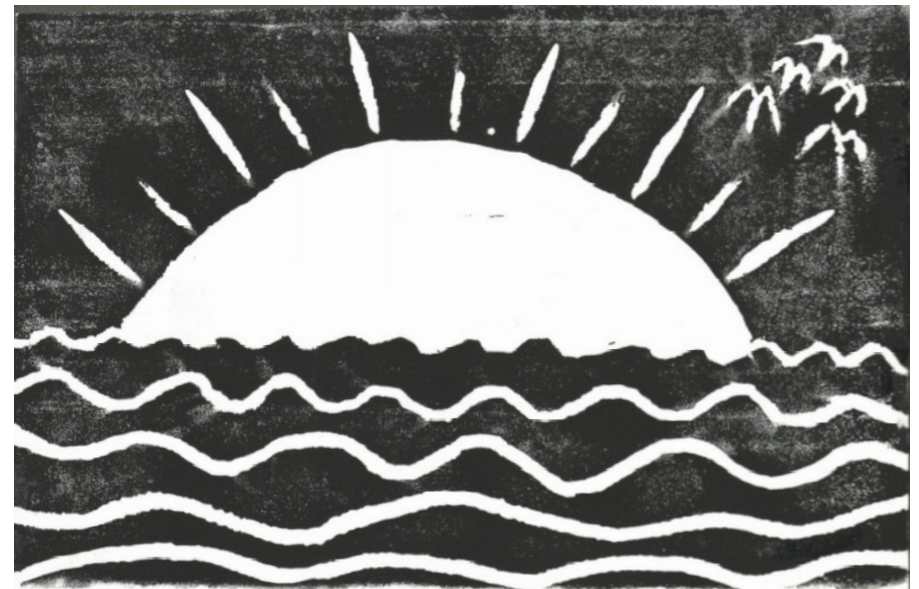
Jack Morgan

Two good-looking girls
teens in their soccer togs
in line for ice cream
their voices charming too
til one hears the conversation--
Life is a lovely melody
it seems
to which someone has put
shoddy lyrics.

At First

Jack Morgan

At first a blurred
figure
in the slow lifting
fog,
then emergent--
this blue heron, tall
in perfect poise
on a rock
in mid-river.



Editor's Note: *Jack Morgan is a Professor Emeritus in the Dept of English and Technical Communication, now living in Connecticut.*

Over

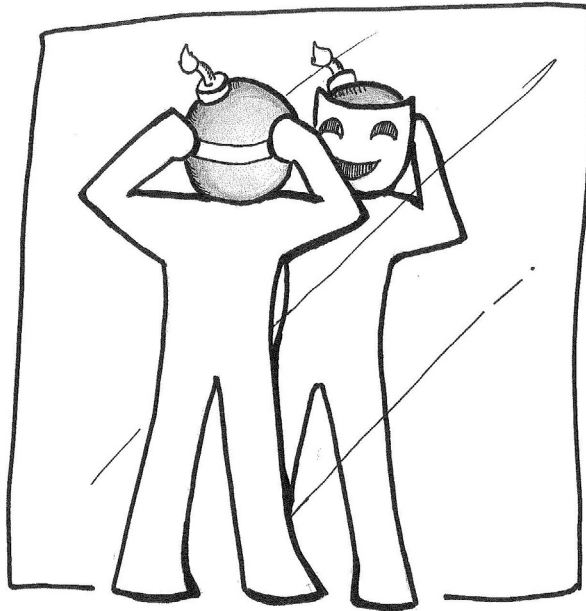
Ryan Myers

I am a man stuck between two towns, one a college town, one the place where i grew up

I am a man stuck in between two states, kansas and missouri
I am a man stuck in between two states, constant anxiety and never ending depression.

Through over-thinking and over-stressing work load, i think my current life might be a little bit over-complicated. I wish i could get over- it but that would be over-simplified. But as life goes, when you think things are over, they're actually not. So as i am trapped in the cage corner being over-blown by an over-powering boxer, whats really coming up next night be a little over-powering. As i am speaking right now, i am probably xanaxed up trying to overcome the feeling of anxiety, wishing that these little pills could fix me forever, instead of just a few minutes. But that's over-simplified too, isn't it? Oh boy, i cant wait for whats coming next. I can't wait until its just

Over.



BOMB MASK — SARAH BROOKS

10 Angstroms Apart

Owen Smith

You can't really touch anything.
When two bodies come close enough together
their constituent atoms brush up
against one another,
separated by distance
on the order of angstroms.
Repulsive force between
the fuzzy orbs of electron shells
holds the atoms apart.

But it feels like touch.

So when I held her
for what was likely the last time, resting my head
against hers,
there were no distance vectors.
There was only the caress of her hair
and the gentle pitter-patter
of heartbeats.
Only the visceral meaning
of close.

But when I drove away,
the space between us stretched out
to four-hundred miles.
Our embrace became the patched concrete of
Nebraskan roads
and farm equipment
left forlorn and rusted amongst the empty
Midwestern grain-fields.
And when I returned to an empty apartment
I finally felt
distance.



Looking Down

Leigha Edwards

It was supposed to be a white light, that's what they always say right? "Go into the light," or whatever. I never saw any light, maybe it's different for everybody—I sure don't know—but I'm telling you there was no light. I can't remember much before I got here, but I know there wasn't any light. I was scared actually because it was so dark; then I heard this voice and believe me it was not what I was expecting to hear either.

"You going to waste eternity laying there?" The voice sounded oddly familiar, but I couldn't quite place it and I wasn't ready to open my eyes just yet anyway.

"Mrs. Smith, that is no way to greet new souls." This voice wasn't familiar at all, but it was gentler than the first—calming in a way that proved only to grate on my nerves.

"Ms. Hannah," the voice called Mrs. Smith said, as though she was not particularly fond of the more friendly voice, "perhaps you would like to tend for one of the charges you have been assigned and let me handle mine in the way I see fit."

"No, that's okay, ma'am, mine isn't here just yet; I have plenty of time." I got the impression this "Ms. Hannah" was only pretending not to hear the faint sneer in Mrs. Smith's tone. The surface I was stretched out on shifted as someone came closer and the younger woman spoke again. "Come on, dear, open your eyes for me." I'd have rolled them if they were open.

"She won't respond to that." Mrs. Smith snapped, then suddenly something—I'm pretty sure a foot—nudged my shoulder. "Get up now, we haven't the time for this." The griping tone appealed to me more than the overly sugary one, and I attempted to flex my fingers against my sides, trying to collect myself so I could do as she bid. My body remained still as I got no response from my extremities, almost causing me to panic, but the voices continued above me.

"You have eternity, Mrs. Smith," Ms. Hannah scolded her. "And you shouldn't kick them." The gentler feeling of someone dusting my shoulder off accompanies her words. I try to shy away from the unfamiliar hand but don't feel myself moving; my muscles are completely unresponsive to my commands.

"Well, don't tell her that." I can't help but laugh at the exasperated huff and my eyes open as I do. Warmth floods me and my nose scrunches up as my fingers suddenly come back to life, digging hard into my hips. Above me stand two women; one smirks having won her argument, and the other looks flustered by my sudden outburst. "There you go she's awake. Scurry off." I recognize Mrs. Smith immediately and not just by the voice I've been listening to.

"I can stay if you'd like." Ms. Hannah, a younger woman, offers but I just smile and shake my head. She frowns but wishes me luck and leaves. I relax a bit as she takes her overly perky aura elsewhere.

I stare up at Mrs. Smith for a moment before taking stock of my surroundings. I'm lying flat on my back on some sort of soft, fluffy material. A little ways away

another body lies in a similar position, only no one is hovering over it, and I wonder how long I was here before anybody noticed.

"Well, come along then," Mrs. Smith holds out her hand and I let her pull me to my feet. I expect the soft puff we're standing on to give way beneath my feet but it smooths out into a paved walkway and I follow behind Mrs. Smith easily, my body now working properly.

I feel like I should ask where we're going, or where we are even, but I can't seem to feel overly concerned. I trail along behind Mrs. Smith at an easy pace and look around at everything. To our right a group of children run past laughing and screaming good-naturedly as they trip over themselves and each other. An elderly couple step out of their way, the puffy, cloud-like ground hardening beneath them as their feet touch it. The women smiles at them as their little feet patter on the walkway, but there is a touch of sadness in her expression as well as she watches them. I look the other way and see a pond sparkling in the bright sunlight. Behind that a honey-golden field of hay or wheat brushes over itself in soft waves as a gentle breeze ruffles the surface of the water. The banks of the small blue mass are littered here and there with men and women dipping lines in the water.

"So, all the choices in the world and that's what you choose to go to eternity wearing?" Mrs. Smith's question guides my wondering eyes downwards. I'm not wearing shoes, but a fuzzy pair of socks keeps me from feeling the strange ground. Above that a pair of jagged jeans without knees, decorated with paint smears and splatters, hangs on my hips. I'm wearing a white t-shirt that is also stained with half handprints and weird shapes left behind from a life-long habit of accidentally leaning on wet canvases and paint trays. The piece of my outfit that gives me pause, though, is the cobalt-blue hoodie tied around my waist.

I know Mrs. Smith is waiting for an answer, but I can't focus on the question as my hands stray to the knot in the sleeves. I slip the worn cloth loose from itself, lift it off my hips, and pull it to my face with shaking fingers. The familiar, warm smell of Trey's cologne clings to the material, and I feel tears burn the backs of my eyes as I crush the soft cotton against my face. I draw a ragged breath of his scent deep into my lungs before quickly tugging the jacket over my head when Mrs. Smith said my name in a much gentler tone.

"You're one to talk of course," I say, finally responding to her question. She had to have heard the choked catch of my voice, but she decides to play along like I knew she would. Some things never change.

"Well, at least I don't look like a hobo," she says, teasingly wrinkling her nose at my appearance. She tugs at the hem of her button-up, smoothing the material over the tops of her slacks. "Now come along, we've got places to be." She turns away from me again, and her sensible shoes continue clacking down our path. Fisting my hands into the too long sleeves so my fingers are covered I hurry after her. She stops without warning and steps off the path.

"Here," she says gesturing to the puff of ground in front of her as though I'm supposed to see something. She glances back at me and rolls her eyes at the confused look on my face. Looking around I see other souls kneeling and leaning into holes in the clouds. I look back at Mrs. Smith still confused and step closer

when she gestures at me.

"I don't understand." I say when I kneel next to her. I expect the clouds to be wet or cold but their comforting warmth seeps through my torn jeans.

"Well of course not, I haven't explained yet," she snaps, startling a laugh out of me and reminding me why she was always my favorite teacher. "When we get here the big guy...you know whom I mean, right?" She waits for me to nod before continuing, "Good, well when we get here the big guy decides—or already knows really—what we love the most. Teachers like me who love nothing more than guiding children, helping them, are blessed to welcome newbies like you. We get to show them where they get to do what they love. Do you understand now?" She stares at me with the same expectant look she always gave me during class and I stare back blankly like I always did. Math was never my friend.

"Not really," I tell her, still wondering why we're kneeling on the ground.

"What do you love to do?" She prompts.

"Paint." I say without even having to think about it, a smile reflexively coming to my face.

"Exactly," she says and hands me a palette I hadn't seen sitting beside us. She brushes some fluffs of cloud out of the way to reveal a pile of jars of paint. I can't help the smile that curves my face, and I reach for the colors but my fingers stop a few inches short as she gets to her feet.

"Are you leaving?" I can't help the nervous edge to my voice when I think of her leaving me alone.

"Not just yet," she says holding her hand out to me. I let her pull me to my feet again and she guides me over to the closest person to us. A girl who looks a few years older than me flashes us a grin and shows me what she's holding. A cat-shaped mass of cloud is cupped between her hands, and as I watch she turns and tosses it into a hole in the ground. Stepping closer I watch the cat grow as it falls; its legs move as though it is running and its tail flicks as it lands on a cloud and jumps to another. Finally it settles on a low-hanging cloud, kneads the material beneath its feet a bit the way cats do, and curls up to rest with a final flick of its tail. Farther down I see the Earth; unable to really see what's happening where I used to live I let my eyes trace the sky instead. I watch color burst along the horizon and look to see a boy with dark hair lying down to reach more easily into the hole in the strange ground in front of him.

"I want to try," I tell Mrs. Smith, who smiles knowingly at me. This time I lead her as I make my way back towards my jars of paint. I notice a hole has opened in the clouds next to them and kneel beside it. I look down at the sky and the ground beneath that, trying to decide what to paint. My eyes pass over sleeves of the hoody I'm still wearing and I reach for the paint. I don't know whether to be surprised or not that there is a jar the exact color I need, so I decide not to worry about it.

I lean down into the sky and hesitantly draw the brush through the air. Color follows my motion on a much larger scale and my strokes become bolder as I decorate the sky, hoping Trey is looking up in the same place I'm looking down. After a few minutes I leverage myself out of the hole to show Mrs. Smith what I've

done only to see she isn't there anymore. I look around but don't see her. Instead I catch the eye of the dark-haired boy.

He smirks at me, raises a jar of bright crimson paint, and bends down. I look to see my brilliant blue sky shaded over with red that quickly fades together into a deep purple. Grinning I streak pink through it and he splashes orange over it all. As we're working over each other, clouds suddenly come to life and crawl across our work. The colors we've strewn over the sky glow through the clouds, and I know that somewhere far below the three of us have created a beautiful sunset or sunrise—I can't really tell which from here.

I lay my paint brush down and settle my head on my arms. I can't quite see the Earth from here, but I can see the sky. I can see the art work of the others here scattered across it, my own painting now joining the mix, and I smile, content for now—just looking down.



I felt your hands
Going places they did not belong
You told me “shhhhh”

The nightmares visit
Always running

So tired

I said no
No.
No!
It happened anyway

I stood
I sat
I ran
I cried
It stayed the same

So tired

One foot, second foot
So much energy

Smile, nod
One foot, second foot
over and over

Your hand on my throat
I didn't care
So tired

This is not a place for me
I'm leaving
One foot, second foot
Tired feet

No more please
I see the sun
One foot, second foot
So tired

Every morning I open my eyes is a victory—
can't you see that?
Gone

Leaving Hell

Amanda Bloom



THE GATES OF ABANDONMENT — ZACHARY GRAU



AMANDA BLOOM — RESILIENCE



FLYING I — IAN FERGUSON



CLASSIC INN, NEW MEXICO — MATTHEW DORSEY

I Once

Skye Tackett

I once walked through the trees of my future
And pressed my hands to the leaves and the
sutures
That held together the parts of my mind
Which had never reacted in kind
To those dreams which realities do burn

I once crossed over the paths of my past
Twisting and winding far as the eye can cast
Its view, and in this vast land I tried
To find the answers to which I remain tied
But found only that this game cannot last

I once thought perhaps I could atone
For my many mistakes and was prone
To a push onto the sharp stone without
Every friend I had ever known
And I was made to go it alone

I once made a break into the breach
And sought out the spirits so as to beseech
Them even the smallest bit of meaning
To what seems the pointless careening
Of the hope and love I could never reach

I once swam into the swell of substance
That may fill my brain and knock my thoughts
askance
At any moment, its presence screaming
For attention when I once was dreaming
And I almost lost my every chance

I once believed I could have made known
All the many ways in which I had grown
But instead saw that my broken throne
Was in reality a tombstone
And I was supposed to go it alone

I once thought myself a poet
But was never brave enough to show it
I once thought myself a fighter
But only acted as begleiter
To the many wrongs I watched occur
I once thought myself a human
But found myself short several lumens
Needed to light the darkness of the wingspan
Of the demons that haunt the dreams of man
I once thought myself something more
Than the fears that linger at my core
And build themselves greater than the lore
Of old when humans had more than doors
Left unopened to dread and could pour
Their dreams and fears alike to the world
Without such a grand need
For all of this misery

I once thought myself anything
And found myself lacking

Because I once walked through the trees of my
future
And I once crossed over the paths of my past
And I once thought perhaps I could atone
And I once made a break into the breach
And I once swam into the swell of substance
And I once believed I could have made known
To myself the myriad paradoxes
Of my being without first seeing
I had formed of my actions a toxin
Spread upon the roots of those human beings
Whom I had chosen to love

I once held that this life was my own
Only to see myself overthrown
While I watched away from me flown
Everything I have ever known
And I thought I could do it alone

A Good Time to Dance

Ian Ferguson



And, deciding it was a good time to dance they did...



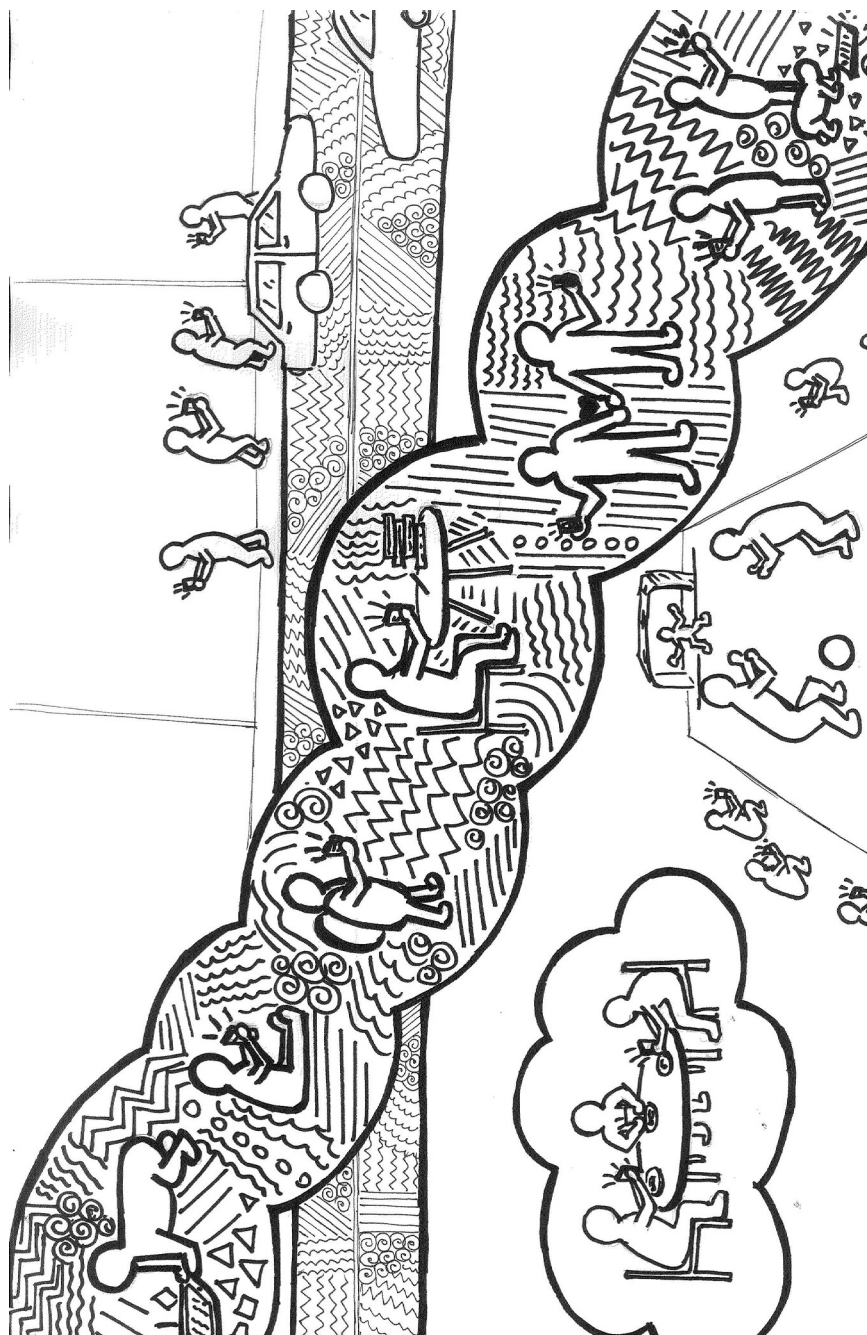
...and all their friends decided to follow...

Rush

Suzanne Young

From point A to point B
By the quickest route available
In the fastest manner possible
Never stopping to look
And breathe and think
To fall in love with the sky
Or the way the sun
Falls on an amiable flower
There is never a moment to spare
For conversation or enjoyment
If it were just me
I would take the time to laugh
With the earth
As busy worker bees
Zip past
Running to the promise
Of destination





CELL PHONE LIFE — ZERIM OISHE

LOL

Sue Wallace

"Mikeman1" and "Basileo";
A chance meeting of names,
A simple twist of fate,
Things would never be the same.

Two strangers looking for conversation,
On the "info superhighway,"
Typing late at night,
With so much to say.

Perhaps if we'd met at a bar,
Things wouldn't have come out the same,
But "chatting" for 3 months first;
A "connection" it became.

Yet, I questioned if it could work—
We lived 5 hours apart...
He was analytical and quiet,
While I was loud and obnoxious; a regular
"upstart."

We met on a whim,
We sent pictures out too,
His looked like a mugshot,
Mine, a "glamour shot," not resembling a
"Sue."

Who would think it would last?
We married 4 months after we met,
Jumped a plane to Hawaii,
Vows on a beach at sunset.

But fate is a funny thing...
It shows we can never second guess,
The changes we'll see,
How our lives will progress.

With a daughter we love,
And 20 years under our belt,
With trials and tribulations,
Still, love and respect are the strengths that
are felt.

Opposites DO survive,
If base values are intact,
If love is held dearly,
And they can use VERBAL communication
to interact!

I met my "soulmate" online,
It's a crazy connection,
But I am the lucky one here,
Cause for me... I found perfection



FLYING II — IAN FERGUSON



SPICEBUSH SWALLOWTAIL CATERPILLAR — STEPHEN ROBERTS

Fable

Joseph Styczynski

Back and forth, the pendulum rocks
While fast asleep, faeries dream
Of snow and sand and grass and sheep,
Castles in the sky, and their own humble keep.

From ancient times, to present day,
Carefully hidden, tucked safely away,
These nimble sprites, while resting at night,
Take to the skies at the first morning's light.

For flowers and trickery, their life is pursuant.
Selfish and spiteful— on occasion, even truant.
Seeking their pleasures without much regard,
For the toils and troubles that brought them this far.

Over torrentuous rivers, and through darkened caves,
Ever vigilant, for the merriment they crave,
These spry gnats— whom loyal are loyal to their queen,
Stay outside of man, seldom to be seen.

To revel at dawn, past the sun's prostrate,
Self-inducing fatigue, their desires to sate,
Falling victim once more, to the sandman's refrain,
As the pendulum rocks, back and forth again.

Big Pharma

Ross Reed

I bumped into this guy I kind of knew the other day outside Home Depot and he cautioned me about vaccines.

“It’s a government plot to kill us. That’s what it is.” He sounded alarmed. He was pulling up on his enormous brown leather belt that went around his corpulent waist.

“What vaccines are you talking about?” I asked.

“Flu shot. Ebola shot. Anything. They’re all bad. I’ve got to spread the word. Make people know.” He paused, breathing heavily. “Got to get the word out.”

I fumbled around for words. “Okay...Is there an ebola vaccine?”

He didn’t say anything, so I continued.

“Why do you think the government wants to kill its own citizens? Why would they want to do that? What’s the incentive?”

“It’s big pharma. Dishing out their poison. Big pharma controlled by the one percent. All they care about is money. Greed. Pure greed. They’re making us all into slaves, that’s what it is.” He stopped, cleared his throat, and continued. “Well, we’re already slaves, yeah, but they want to really turn the screws. Show who’s in charge. It’s their fascist agenda.”

“I see.”

“Big pharma. I’m serious. The vaccine can kill you, or turn you into a flesheating zombie. Like that guy in Florida who ripped that other guy’s face off and ate it. Ripped his face right off while he was still alive. That guy took the vaccine.”

“And it turned him into a cannibal?”

“Oh yeah. We’ve got to stop it.” The guy was shifting his weight from scuffed fake leather high-top to scuffed fake leather high-top, pulling up on his belt.

I tried to see the bright side, relieve some of this guy’s anxiety. “Hey, maybe it’s not such a bad thing. I mean, think about it.”

“What?” He looked puzzled. Sweat was beading up on his forehead.

“We’ve got the top two global issues right there. If you don’t count global warming, I mean. Overpopulation and starvation.”

“Yeah?” He looked like he didn’t get it.

“Cannibalism will solve both of our problems. It’ll solve the food shortage, and it’ll deal with overpopulation. We’ve already got 7.2 billion people on this planet. That’s like at least a billion or two too many. Don’t you think? So maybe we should spread the word. Try to get people to get the vaccination.”

He started laughing. He looked happy. He looked really happy, almost gleeful. Then he looked sad. “But what if they turn into zombies? They’ll be undead, so they’ll live forever. It would be a nightmare. God. Zombies.” He was shifting again, back and forth, back and forth.

I really wanted to assuage his pain. “So what we really need to do is change the vaccine so we eliminate the zombie-thing, but make sure people still die or turn into cannibals, right? What’d you think?”

He gazed at me, real serious-like. “That’s just crazy.” He looked at the ground. His brow furrowed. Then he looked up, a sly smile spreading over his face. “Think we could do it?”

There was a long pause. For the first time, he stared hard into my eyes. It was a bit unnerving. He looked around. Then he spoke softly, in a near-whisper.

“Hey, like... let’s keep it on the Q.T., okay? I’d e-mail you, you know, but it’d go straight to the NSA.”

“Yeah, I gotcha.”

He looked sad again and began pulling on his belt. “Hey, Merry Christmas, brother. At least you can still say that without getting arrested.”

“Thanks, you too, man.”

He turned, still pulling at his belt, and slowly hobbled away.

The Window

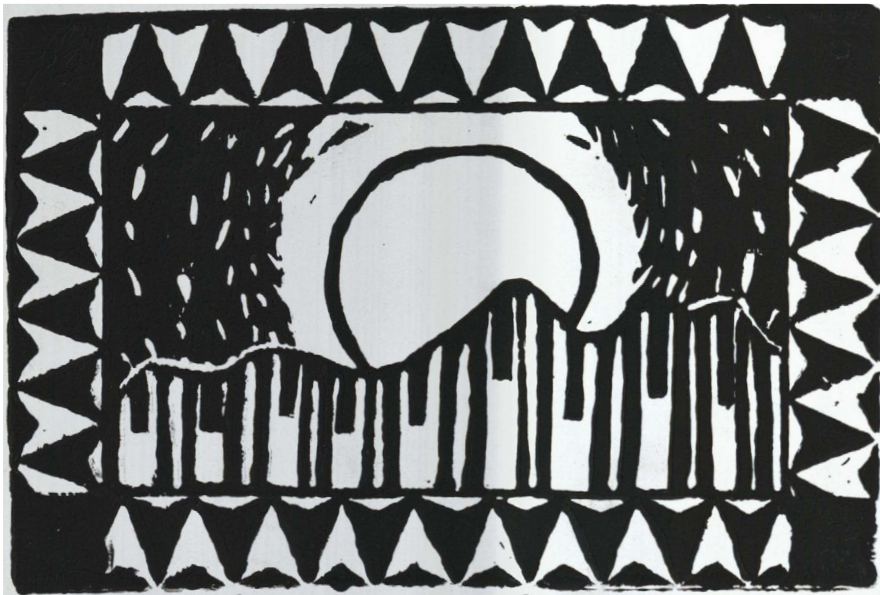
Ian Ferguson

Author's note: Based from
Chapter 1, "Fountains in the Rain,"
from Acts of Worship by Yukio
Mishima

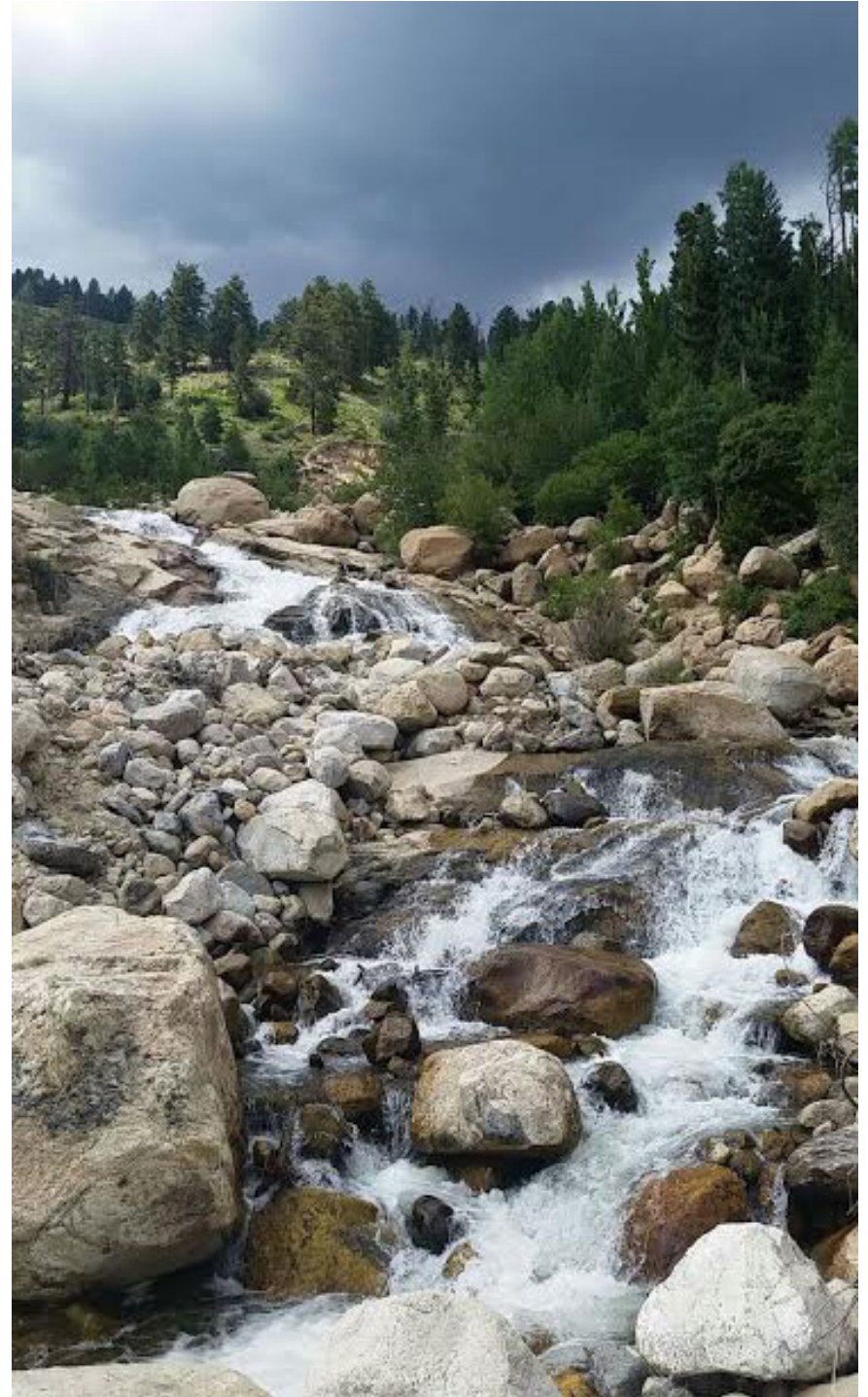
...we stood or did we sit sensing time moving around
us not aging for that moment and listening to the
noise of the rain falling a coalesced drop looking for
a soft landing not on the roof where its cry can be
heard but in the garden bringing life with its death or
hitting one tree standing in a random modulation...

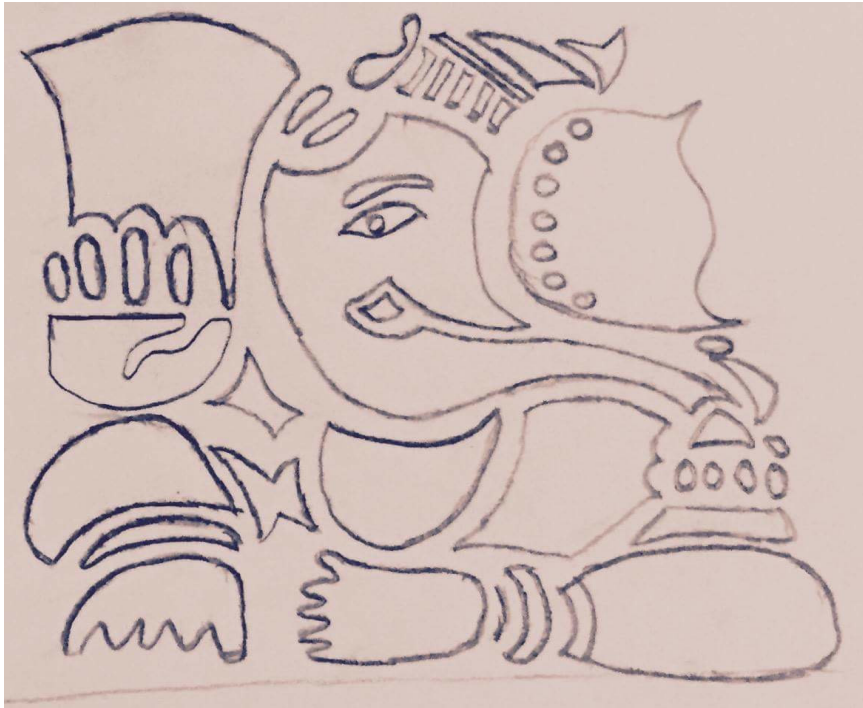
...of souls planted by the wind reaching upwards
and merging into the blanket of grey where once
the sun shone or being the last drop to land on a
leaf before it folds under the weight allowing it to
continue its journey reconstituted with the memory
of its brothers and sisters for another breath...

...now nothing moved until our eyes narrowed to see
the individual drops still falling through only tears...



BALANCE — NICOLE KORKLAN





GANESH — VISWA ANOOP NERELLA

The Last Dance

Ian Ferguson

Author's Note: Based from Chapter 2, "Raisin Bread," from Acts of Worship by Yukio Mishima

...lightning strikes and the dance begins,
distant thunder provides a syncopated beat,
the rain the melody, the wind the harmony,
two bodies cleaved from one but entwined
hands raised with fire on their fingertips...

...appear to gyrate together surrounded
by many friends dancing in the shadows
consumed by the same passion, ablaze,
soon all that will remain will be ashes
where the children can no longer play...

i want to live as if i were a firework.
it is an absolute ownership of the self
to recognize that none escape life without burns,
and to charge forth recklessly.
screaming across the night sky,
fireworks cannot go unnoticed
with their gaudy colors and thick trails of smoke;
i wish to be myself as unapologetically.

Flashpoint

Rebecca Marcolina

brash and impatient,
i want my voice to reverberate across the masses,
whether i speak to one or a hundred thousand.
my words will echo the raucous thunder of fireworks,
in the ceaseless recognition that i am alive,
that i am something; be it nothing more than a
camera flash against the black smudge of time.

do we not delight in the glare and promise of a simple
firework, a chemical accident launched into being?
if a firework can be beautiful despite its brokenness,
then i too can rise from my own ashes,
cry into the void, and flourish.



ART HAPPENS — RAZ KERWIN

In The Mood

Jay Clark

"I can't believe you guys are making me go," Jack muttered, fuming as they walked down the street toward the flashing light.

His friends wanted him to attend a jazz club they've been to a couple times. All of them said it was a lot of fun, but Jack didn't opt for those settings. He rarely spent time with friends and rarely spent time for himself. He was more concerned with inheriting his father's company, which was a lot of work, especially in these times.

"I didn't want to go at first either, but it is a lot of fun. Not that I care if you're there or not," Jay remarked. Jack brushed it off. Jay was usually an ass.

Ada bounced forward with her dress flowing behind her; there were no shoulders, the dress stopping just above her ankles. Matching this dress was a pair of gloves that snaked up to her elbow. Her elegant hair was tied back, a beautiful comb that looked to be made of the finest gems sat atop her bun, reflecting the light like the moon.

Ada turned around to face Jack, who was still sulking. "What Jay meant to say," she paused to give a meaningful glare at person in question, "is that we're so happy that you're joining us!"

Jack looked to Ira whose face was bathed in colors from the neon signs proclaiming the club they were approaching. Ira realized that Jack was glancing his way and gave Jack a small, reassuring smile. Jack perked up, knowing that his friends were trying to be there for him. Yet, as he neared the brilliantly lit signs he felt the gloom as opposed to the ecstatic connotation of the neon.

As the group of four made their way into the club, Jack only paid attention to the feeling of a rock sinking deeper in his stomach with each pluck of the deep bass that was reverberating through the room. There weren't as many people as Jack anticipated, but he was at the edge of his comfort zone around others. All his life he had spent secluded and avoided venues that attracted large crowds.

Dim steel blue illuminated the area. Tables lined the inner walls of the room, leaving a square area in the middle meant for dancing. Most of the people currently in the club were lingering towards the sides, leaving few in the open. In the center of the room sat a simple stage. To the far left of the stage sat a beautiful ebony grand piano, its player completely absorbed as his fingers danced over the keys. Near him was a drummer sitting at an elegant kit, the outsides of the drums the same ebony as the piano. The drummer was focused, keeping to his role as the metronome of the band. The man on the bass stood out, his brown instrument contrasting with the black of the other two. The bassist was just as absorbed as the pianist, plucking the string as he guided the drummer with the beat as well. The other musicians were enjoying themselves. The rest of the band consisted of five saxophones, four trumpets, and three trombones. A singer stood in front of the band, improvising, her voice in a steady crescendo.

The music was light. Soft chatter among others could be heard at a steady volume with the music. The scene was peaceful; anyone else would have been at ease. However, Jack was not. He had realized that while he was busy observing his surroundings, his friends had dispersed into the suffocating crowd of strangers that now asphyxiated him. His breathing was starting to come out in labored gasps as anxiety like an ocean swept over him. Jack coughed, trying to force his suffocating feelings down. A young man of his status shouldn't be this worried of public interaction, he'd had many years to learn how to quell his anxiety. Still, this was different. The situations he was used to were business meetings with important clients, not loud clubs with live music.

"It don't mean a thing, if it ain't got that swing."

The last lyric faded out, replaced by soft applause and whooping from the crowd. The band paused for maybe a second, before rocketing into their next tune. This tune started with heavy drums, Jack's heart accelerating with the tempo. The crowd became more rowdy and took to the center floor. More tables cleared up. Jack knew he had to sit down. Every beat pounded in resonance with his head; he wanted to turn tail and run. But Jack was not a coward. He would not flee.

When he made it to the table, the trombone bass line echoed throughout the room. The trumpets soon entered, nasty blaring tones perfect for the jazz tune. The booming trumpets sent waves of nausea to Jack's stomach. He sank down into his seat, trying to ignore the melody passed into the saxophones while trumpets played earsplitting backgrounds. Jack had heard the song on the radio before. It had not once evoked this reaction. Benny Goodman's "Sing Sing Sing" was one of his favorite tunes, he should be excited. Yet here he was, about to vomit.

A young man with blond hair sat in the free seat across from him. His hairstyle was oddly long, blond locks barely touching his shoulder. Jack would have thought he was taking a break from dancing, except the stranger's piercing blue eyes were focused on him instead of the musicians. Jack made eye contact and didn't even attempt a small smile at this stranger.

"Are you okay?" the stranger asked, raising his voice to be heard over the roaring music.

Jack wanted to say yes. Just a simple lie was all he had to say to escape conversation with a person he didn't even know. Jack didn't know why he shook his head. He would have said yes. Maybe if it was someone else.

The stranger gave a soft smile. Jack tried to deduce if it was of victory or sympathy, but the throbbing pain in his head was too great for him to even try. He thought the stranger would ask what was wrong, just like any other person would. For some reason he didn't.

"Are you here alone?"

Jack shook his head again, but also followed up with "my friends dragged me here and then ditched me the moment we got here."

"Same, but I ditched mine." The guy gave a soft laugh.

Jack laughed too.

"I'm Leo. What's your name?" the stranger, Leo said, after they finished laughing.

"Jack."

Jack didn't realize how fast the time passed while he was talking to Leo. His pounding headache became distant memory and the music simply became background noise. Everything else—the lights, the people—became non-important to the two. Song by song passed by, and minutes turned to hours as they just chatted with each other. Simple, beautiful, meaningless chatter. Nothing of importance that either of the two would remember in the morning. The chatter was an excuse, an excuse to enjoy each other's company as the world continued to move on around them.

Suddenly a saxophone pickup echoed through the air, causing Leo to jump up. Jack, recognizing the song as "In the Mood" by Glenn Miller was startled at what made man the young man so excited.

"This is my favorite song!" exclaimed Leo, offering a hand to Jack, "want to dance?" Jack hesitated for a moment, cursing himself as he felt his face heat up.

"I don't really know how to dance," Jack said, trying not to mumble.

It was the sad truth—he never had time for lessons. Dancing was never an important skill to him. He had never needed it in his life. He was content with watching others' feet move around in elegant patterns.

"Don't worry, I'll lead," Leo stated confidently, grabbing Jack's hand.

Jack let himself be dragged onto the dance floor, as other people began to come on as well. He prepared himself for the wave of suffocation to flow over him, but it didn't come. Something was different. Maybe it was the song. Maybe it was Leo. Suddenly, Jack stopped and was face to face with the blond man. Leo smiled, this was a different smile from earlier. This smile showed determination and something else that Jack couldn't entirely pin down.

"Let's go," Leo said. Then they were moving.

They swung in time with the music, back, forth, back, forth. Jack, despite having no prior experience, didn't feel worried at all. As more people began to crowd the small area, Leo and Jack's mobility became limited. They still swayed with the rhythm, their feet shuffling along the floor instead of stepping. The excitement in the room was palpable, rising with every crescendo. Jack began to enjoy himself, having fun with Leo. He wouldn't call this dancing. They were mostly shuffling and swaying with the music at this point.

The band repeated the part they had just played, getting softer. The dancers slowed the amount of their movement in response to the lowered volume. The band repeated once again, going down to *piano*. The dancers' swaying and shuffling movements were so slight they were almost as if frozen. Jack's heart pounded in his chest as he waited, knowing that something was going to happen. A sudden *forte* blasted the *piano* away, the excitement in the crowd erupting like a crescendo. The piece repeated its melody again, the trumpets playing an increasingly high scale, and then the song was over after a rumbling low note.

Jack looked at Leo to see a grin spread over his face. Jack had to admit he had had the time of his life.

"Hey Jack, there you are!" Jack heard a familiar female voice call to him.

He turned around to see Ada waving to him. Sighing, he made his way over to her.

"I take it those are your friends?" asked Leo.

"Yeah," responded Jack, not elaborating further.

It didn't take very long to cross the room to where Ada was standing, her eyes coolly met his.

"We've been looking for you! We're about to leave," Ada said, either ignoring or not noticing Leo who stood right next to him.

"Yeah, okay," Jack replied turning to Leo.

"So, did you have a good time," Leo asked, still grinning.

"Yeah," Jack said, thinking for a second, "thanks."

"Will you be here next week?"

"Will you?"

"Yes."

"Then yes, I will be here."

"Okay. Goodbye Jack."

"See ya, Leo."

They bid adieu, Jack following Ada to join Jay and Ira. He left the dim lighting, live music, and cool steel blue club behind as he walked out the door into the fresh air. The bright lights greeted him, but he welcomed them again. Next week he would be willing to see them again. They meant he would be able to see Leo.

"So, Jack, how do you feel about coming back next week?" Ada asked as they walked down the sidewalk.

Jack didn't face her so she didn't see the smile spreading on his face. "I think I'll be in the mood."



WHIRLING DERVISHES — ED MALONE

River of Time

Joseph Styczynski

Through the woods,
A merry caravan plays,
While a ruthless horde plows,
Through the woods.

A melody of strings and nature,
A sonnet of blood and steel.

Two halves of a pendulum,
Their opposition, almost surreal.

Instruments of enlightenment and peace,
Instruments of conquest and war.

Seemingly coexisting,
While for some a difficult chore.

The minstrel tunes his delicate lute,
The warlord hones his bloodied blade.

From dusk till dawn, the horde plows on,
All while the caravan plays.

Cyrulus dreams of honoring the king,
Cassius dreams of toppling the crown.

Both desires— one humble, one cruel—
Seek to bring their dreamers renown.

So as one plays,
While the other does slay,

And the moon, with the sun,
Shares both night and day,

Do seek a path,
Whether by song or the sword,

And be pursuant of one's goals;
A lifetime to pave forward.



FOREST CITY — AMANDA BLOOM



FOG II — ALEXANDRA BOECKMAN

What a World Is This

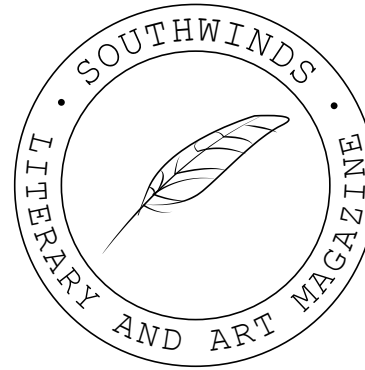
Suzanne Young

What a world is this?
Where happiness feeds guilt
Love the root of immense pain
Facts shrouded by opinions
Doubt we all the purpose
Come to a place of uncertainty
When right seems wrong
In these times it's hard
To see why we should continue
What will make things work
To the doubter, the conflicted,
This I say -
Live true to yourself
Without fear of your conflicted desire
Go. Act.



RUINS OF A GENUESE CASTLE IN ENEZ, TURKEY — ED MALONE

Southwinds Staff



Dr. Anne Cotterill, the faculty advisor, is an associate professor in the Department of English and Technical Communication at Missouri S&T. Her research focuses on early modern British writing and culture. She teaches courses in Shakespeare, British literature, and world literature.

Interested in joining the staff of or contributing your work to *Southwinds*? Contact Dr. Anne Cotterill at cotteril@mst.edu, or check us out online at southwinds.mst.edu to view previous issues or submit your work.

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English and Technical Communication

The Department of English and Technical Communication at Missouri S&T offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in English, English education, and technical communication. These programs are based on a wide range of courses taught by experienced, accomplished faculty in the following areas: American, British, and world literatures, creative writing, rhetoric and composition, technical communication and technical writing, and linguistics.

The department currently has 19 full and part-time faculty whose research and creative interests include Southern culture and film, medieval literature and folkloristics, food studies and American literature, the history of technical communication, American culture in the 1920s, the eighteenth-century literary fragment, Victorian literature and medicine, early modern British literature, usability studies, visual communication, diffusion of technology, and original fiction-writing. The faculty's scholarly and creative work results in numerous publications.



Southwinds The Creative Arts Magazine of Missouri S&T



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